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ABSTRACT

An in-progress staff development program in a small, rural school district in South Carolina strives to make teaching and supervising more rewarding to the staff member while at the same time improving instruction for students in the schools. The program is the result of attempts by the school district to survive through staff development. With limited funds to institute change, the school district utilized consultants from a nearby college and university. Components of the 5-year program include needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. In anticipation of staff growth, the model moves from structured to less structured experiences and focuses on weaknesses identified by a variety of sources. One of the plan's major strengths is classroom follow-up. A self improvement plan is appended, and charts and figures are included in the text of the report. (JMK)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT: A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

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School districts of the 1980's, whether immense or minute, metropolitan or rural, are plagued with numerous problems. On one hand, there is withdrawal of parental support, while on the other, there are demands for higher student achievement on standardized tests. In the midst of the electronic era and knowledge explosion, Schools of Education graduate less competent students than those in other disciplines. In the minds of many people, whether parents or not, basic skills now include art, music, drama, and physical education, subjects which build competencies lateralized in the right hemisphere of the cortex of the brain, and not necessarily just reading, writing, and calculation, left hemisphere specialities, as the concept once implied. Morale of faculty is low because the media and the many newly released educational reports focus on negative rather than positive effects of the American educational system. The general attitude appears to be that schools should produce more with less money. In the opinion of the authors, one of the ways for the school district to survive the upheaval is to institute a viable staff development program with a minimum of money.

According to Dale (1982), staff development is the totality of educational and personal experiences that contribute toward an individual's being more nearly competent and satisfied in an assigned role. In addition to inservice education, the concept includes organizational development, consultation, communication and coordination, leadership, and evaluation.

Inservice education includes activities designed to maintain the school program such as the development of teaching skills, planning and organization of instruction, expansion of subject matter knowledge, and the implementation of curricula and procedures. However, in addition to the maintenance activities, the school unit must address the issue of growth of the staff. Personal and professional growth of staff is a key element in the school district going beyond a minimum program; a minimum program is the program required by the State Department of Education.

The concept of organizational development implies building program climate. Staff development for organizational development gets the faculty communicating and solving problems together. Too often teachers and other staff become apathetic when they perceive themselves as puppets and tools of an uncaring bureaucracy.

Consultation is giving direction to programs. It may include conducting workshops, assisting with building staff

development, implementation, and evaluation. However, a major function of consultation is assisting with administrative planning with a view toward cooperative success.

Communication and coordination are important elements of staff development. These elements deal with inter-building communication, information about resources, true communication between administration and staff, and central office coordination.

The leadership role of staff development provides for innovation or change. Leadership means suggesting new curricular and instructional approaches, identifying problems and suggesting solutions, and researching ideas for evaluating practices and procedures. Should new programs be started, it may mean, also, assisting with the innovative processes with enthusiasm and imaginative sacrifice.

The final element of staff development is evaluation. Evaluation involves conducting properly prepared needs assessments, evaluating resources, and evaluating the staff development efforts.

Building a viable staff development program in a small, rural district is more difficult than in the larger, more wealthy districts. Small school districts individually tend to lack personnel with time and leadership qualities for the successful implementation of a plan. Nor are these resources abundant regionally. This paper describes a partnership approach for solving the needs of staff development in a poor, rural school district.

In an effort to test the idea of staff development, several faculty members from nearby South Carolina State College, a predominantly black college, and the University of South Carolina, a traditionally white school, agreed to serve as consultants to a district typically lacking in the introductory criteria for faculty development. The partnership arrangement proved beneficial to both the school district and the nearby college and university. The district received specialized talents at nominal amounts of district money, while the college and university faculty received practical experience in the reality of surviving with rural resources.

The school district in the midlands of South Carolina has less than one thousand students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Three schools comprise the district: a child development center, an elementary school, and a junior-senior high school. The buildings are old and, in some instances, badly in need of repair. Prior to the coming of the present superintendent, the district had three superintendents in five years, two of whom were abruptly terminated for mismanagement of funds. Although the community has one industry, the majority of the parents farm, work in service occupations in the small town, or commute an average of forty miles to the larger industrial areas for

employment. Over seventy-five percent of the students receive free lunch, indicative of students from homes with low socio-economic levels. Virtually all attitudes toward the school were poor; students, teachers, and parents demonstrated apathy about the school. Scores on standardized tests such as the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) ranked the performance of the children between the twenty-second and the forty-first percentiles, higher scores in the lower grades and lower ones in the upper grades. Out of ninety-three school districts in South Carolina, published articles in the newspaper list the district among the bottom six school districts in student performance on the Basic Skills Assessment Program tests (Norton, 1984).

Since the arrival of the present superintendent, who possesses unusual leadership skills, the district is gradually changing. After a year of orientation, the superintendent began seeking ideas that would improve the attitudes and skills of the students and staff. It was during the seeking phase tnat he began talking to curriculum and management authorities. The board supported the superintendent in the decision to hire a team of specialists: one early childhood, one elementary, and one secondary.

The team suggested a comprehensive evaluation of the instructional program. In addition to assessment data from observations in the classroom and individual and group conferences with the teachers, the team felt the need for a measure of attitudes from the parents. With the need for an instrument, the team, along with an evaluation specialist, developed a questionnaire which was fine-tuned to the needs of the school district.

Needs Assessment

Teachers, administators, parents, and consultants provided data for the needs assessment. Observations in the classrooms and formal and informal conferences with the teachers showed the need for the following: (1) more experience-oriented instruction; (2) more time-on-task for both the student and teacher; (3) better implementation of the Basic Skills Assessment Program in the total curriculum; (4) a program designed to build teacher and student self-esteem; (5) parent information and involvement programs; (6) updated curriculum guides; (7) a retention and promotion policy; (8) teacher evaluation procedure tied to staff development; and (9) revised procedures for reporting to parents.

On the school district questionnaire, parents and teachers gave the school an overall mark of achievement and ratings on curriculum, instruction, human relations, physical plant, transportation, opportunities for personnel development, and performance by administration and the school board. Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 through 4 summarize the findings from the 26% of the parents and 77% of the teachers who responded. In the overall rating, all three schools and the district as a whole

Bar Graphs of Overall Ratings Given Each School

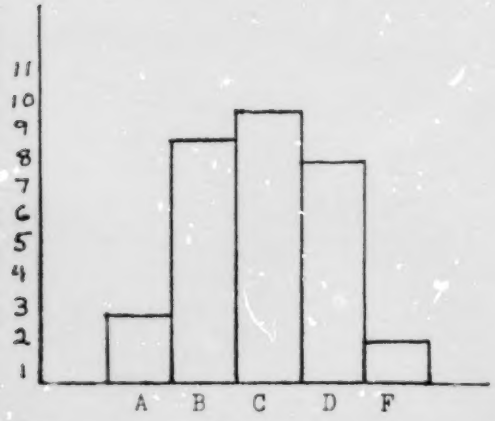


Figure 1: Child Development Center

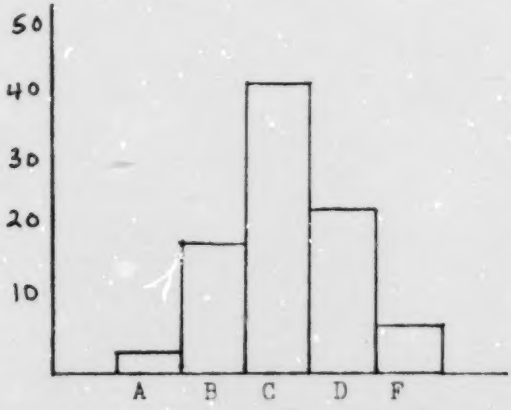


Figure 2: Elementary School

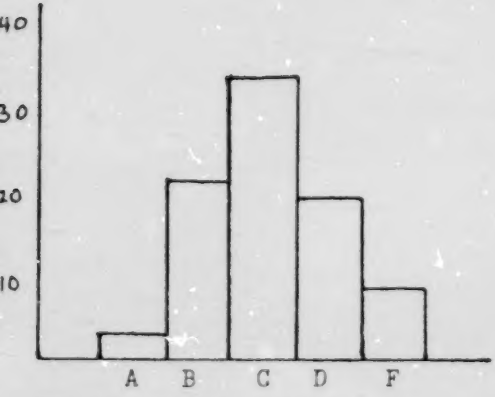


Figure 3: High School

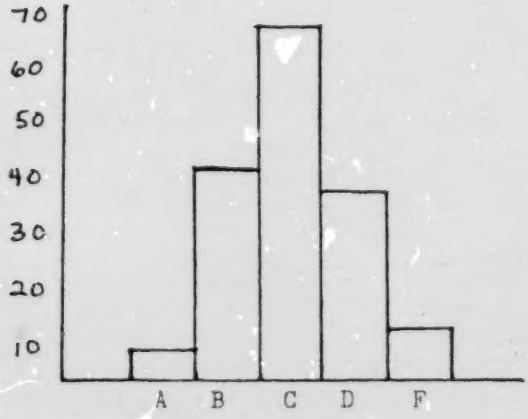


Figure 4: Total District

Table 1

Percentages in Each Rating Category for Each School and the District Total (Parents and Teachers Combined)

School	Rating									
	A		B		C		D		F	
	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%	freq.	%
Child Development Center	3	9.4	9	28.1	10	31.3	8	25.0	2	6.2
Elementary School	2	2.2	18	19.6	42	45.7	24	26.1	6	6.5
High School	3	3.3	23	25.0	35	38.0	21	22.8	10	10.9
Total District*	8	4.7	43	25.1	69	40.4	38	22.2	13	7.6

* The total for the district does not equal the sum of the three schools since some respondents indicated no school and others indicated they had children in more than one school.

Table 2

Mean Response to Each Subscale for Parents and Teachers in Each School and the District*

School	Group	School Board	Administration	Curriculum	Instruction	Human Relations	Physical Plant	Transportation	Community Involvement	Personnel Growth & Development	Total
Child Development Center	Parents	2.35	2.73	2.85	2.75	1.25	3.10	2.44	2.13	2.62	2.71
	Teachers	2.27	2.63	2.39	2.17	1.28	2.88	2.25	1.56	2.67	2.49
	Combined	2.34	2.71	2.77	2.64	1.25	3.06	2.41	2.02	2.63	2.67
Elementary School	Parents	2.35	2.75	2.77	2.66	1.25	3.34	2.67	2.10	2.60	2.71
	Teachers	2.61	2.73	2.61	2.19	1.25	3.17	2.33	1.86	2.50	2.61
	Combined	2.41	2.74	2.74	2.55	1.25	3.30	2.59	2.04	2.57	2.68
High School	Parents	2.60	2.81	2.82	2.69	1.50	3.51	2.50	2.22	2.75	2.81
	Teachers	2.16	2.27	2.36	2.20	1.25	3.27	2.28	1.68	2.27	2.36
	Combined	2.49	2.68	2.72	2.59	1.45	3.44	2.45	2.10	2.64	2.71
Total District	Parents	2.44	2.77	2.79	2.69	1.38	3.36	2.53	2.15	2.64	2.74
	Teachers	2.39	2.50	2.47	2.15	1.25	3.19	2.28	1.83	2.46	2.49
	Combined	2.42	2.69	2.70	2.54	1.35	3.31	2.46	2.06	2.58	2.67

* The lowest possible score was 1.00 (a negative attitude) and the highest response was 5.00 (a positive attitude).

received a C rating with a relatively normal, bell-shaped distribution. In the specific areas, the physical plant, curriculum, and administration received the poorest ratings, and human relations, community involvement, and the school board the best. As would be expected, teachers tended to grade higher than the parents on the items.

Analysis of the questionnaire data surfaced two additional areas for improvement other than the areas identified through teacher observations and conferences. The two areas were school plant and administration. Although the condition of the physical plant is beyond the realm of staff development, the educating of principals and other supervisory personnel in management techniques and interpersonal relationships is not.

Other documents examined by the consultants were the Basic Skills Assessment Program test scores, percentile ranks of the various grade levels on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, the drop-out rate, and the retention history. Findings from these sources substantiated the urgency for change in school climate, curriculum, and instructional techniques.

Planning

Before actual planning began, the administrators, faculty, and consultants researched the literature to find out what responsible previous research said about staff development. In staff development that has been successful, the school district accepted a set of basic assumptions and developed their program accordingly. The assumptions suggested by Wood, McQuarrie, and Russell (1981) served as the guide. The beliefs are:

1. All staff need inservice throughout their careers.
2. Significant improvement in educational practice takes considerable time and long-term inservice programs.
3. Inservice education should focus on improving the quality of school programs and the growth of the individual.
4. Educators are motivated to learn new procedures when they have some control over their learning and are free from threat.
5. Educators vary widely in their competencies and readiness to learn.
6. Professional growth requires commitment to new performance norms.
7. School climate influences the success of professional development.
8. The school is the most appropriate unit or target of change in education.
9. School districts have the primary responsibility for providing the resources for inservice training.
10. The principal is the key element for adoption and continued use of new practices and programs in a school.

In addition to establishing common beliefs about staff development, the team studied Hunt's (1970) work describing adult

learning theory and the structure of the training environment. Hunt hypothesized that adult development is a four-stage process with each stage requiring varying degrees of structure and decision-making. According to Hunt, Stage One learners have a right-wrong orientation to situations and require a highly structured staff development program. Stage Two learners break away from strict rules and beliefs and need choice in their selection of activities. Stage Three learners recognize that they have a variety of alternatives and can choose the one that best fits the situation and, therefore, should be given opportunities to participate in the planning and delivery of staff development programs. The last stage is the Stage Four learners. Stage Four learners are able to synthesize information and create additional categories to accommodate new information. The training environment for Stage Four learners is nondirective, allowing for creative thinking, pursuit of topics of personal interest, and individual goal setting.

With basic beliefs about staff development clarified and the theory of adult learning examined, the school district engaged in long-term planning. Through a series of meeting with faculty, central office staff, parent advisory committee, and consultants, the school district accepted the following objectives. The school district knows the importance of flexibility and will adjust as the plan evolves. In some areas, since it was difficult to separate curricula and special programs from staff development, they are included in the staff development plan.

Objectives for Years One Through Five

First Year

1. Selected school staff are to visit other school systems of comparable size whose student achievement exceeds that of the visiting district. The purpose of the visits is to compare methods, materials, grouping patterns, and other features in order to determine reasons for lagging achievement in the visitor's own district.

2. Consultants are to devise an instrument to measure both teacher and parental attitudes, and administer the instrument. Such an instrument serves as a pretest measurement at the beginning of the five-year plan.

3. The consulting team is to identify needs of the school district from such data as standardized test scores, analyses of classroom observation, the standardized school district questionnaire for parents, and the conducting of interviews with teachers, principals, and selected members of the advisory council.

4. The whole school district is to formulate clearly the objectives for the five years.

5. Jointly all participants above the student level are to assist in the development of the staff development plan. Important are delineations of goals, thrusts, and scheduling.

Second Year

1. The Central Office is to appoint a Staff Development Coordinator to function on the district level.

2. The School Board is to appropriate sufficient funds for supplies, support materials, and services, plus honorariums for the consulting staff.

3. The consulting team is to conduct a series of workshops on target areas in the needs assessment.

4. The teachers are to revise curriculum guides to include skills and subskills in the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) in mathematics and language arts.

5. The middle school teachers are to develop activities and teaching strategies for the implementation of the advisee-advisor (A-A) period the following year.

6. All concerned in the project are to address the problem of improvement of the school morale climate. Damaging problems with low self-esteem have occurred on levels of both students and faculty.

7. All participants are to evaluate the Staff Development Program and revise accordingly for the needs of the next year.

Third Year

1. The School Board is to appropriate funds for professional libraries in the individual schools.

2. The School Board is to appropriate adequate funds for that type of staff development involving off-site programs, such as workshops, conferences, and short courses.

3. Consultants are to offer a series of educational seminars and workshops from which the faculty may select the topics they feel appropriate to them.

4. Teachers are to correlate the skills and subskills in the science and social studies subjects with the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP), as those skills are outlined in the Program. The results should then be apparent in the teachers' curriculum guides and daily lesson plans.

5. The middle school teachers are to implement the advisee-advisor (A-A) period. The A-A period is to be a twenty-

minute group guidance session aimed at teaching problem-solving skills, personal awareness, including grooming, values clarification, and career education.

6. To implement a parent volunteer program at the individual school, the task of the staff is to inspire and direct the volunteerism of the program.

7. The volunteer work is to consist of assistance to teachers, such as becoming aides in the library, classroom, lunchroom and on the sporting fields. Male parents are to help at night or on Saturdays with such tasks as putting up shelving or constructing and maintaining playground equipment.

8. Everyone should become involved in community relations. Perhaps the only way to overcome a negative perception in the community is to obliterate the ignorance and misinformation by effective communication of the many constructive activities and contributions of the schools and their talented personnel. Such information becomes most effective if it is handled in a newspaper or newsletter format, although occasional press releases are effective in their place. When the district establishes a distribution schedule, it should follow such a commitment rigorously.

9. Experienced people and newcomers, beginning with principals, are to engage in an assigned relationship, one-on-one, and peer-mentor, for the purposes of psychological support and coaching in order to find and implement new ideas. Such relationships are effective incubators of a more dynamic school system. The main idea is the elimination or removal of professional inhibitions; coaching, especially, is productive in the stimulation of creative attitudes and behaviors among teachers.

Fourth Year

1. The fourth year is critical in that the participants are to create a new package of teacher evaluation instruments and procedures. The new instruments should comprise evaluations for supervisors, peers, students, parents, and self. The procedures will state when annual and continuing contract teachers will be evaluated, and since the purpose of the evaluations for continuing teachers is to assist with weaknesses, staff development will recede to a normal development pattern basis of one-to-one.

2. The consultants are to offer seminars for growth experience from which the staff may select, according to need, for personal and professional development.

3. The individual staff member is to make a personal growth plan. The plan includes long-range and short-range goals,

assessments of strengths and weaknesses, a plan of action, a timetable, and evidence of accomplishment. The purpose of the growth plan is to cause the staff to think realistically about their own potential, their self-development procedures, and the concrete pattern for career growth that their teaching can in fact follow.

4. Emphatically, the school board is to provide line item appropriations for travel and registration fees for conferences, conventions, and workshops out of the district. When appropriate, incidental fees are an important part of such expenses.

5. The teaching staff are to design procedures for the implementation of a recognition award for excellence in teaching well in advance of the installation of the program the following year. The program is to be implemented in the Fifth Year, and open to all teaching staff. The program criteria must include student achievement data and objective performance data on each candidate.

6. The staff are to assess the activities and successes and failures of the Fourth Year and make necessary adjustments. If the district has followed the program conscientiously, there should be less need for fine-tuning.

Fifth Year

1. All concerned are to implement the procedures from the teacher evaluation package as formulated the previous year.

2. Individual schools are to implement the award program as it applies to them.

3. Consultants are to continue to offer a variety of seminars and workshops according to new needs and desires of the staff of which, by now, they should be aware and for which they should be prepared.

4. Even though additional financing requirements will be difficult to sell to the constituency, the school board is to continue to support off-campus travel costs and registration fees.

5. If the district is able to demonstrate improvement in over-all performance and community acceptance, it is ready to approach industry or similar patronage institutions for such involvement programs as Adopt-a-School or Adopt-a-Class. School personnel by now should have asked for visits by and involvement with representatives of industry and the professions. The entire district is to search out such contributions and make certain that copies of their

newspapers and newsletters have been reaching the appropriate offices of the targeted benefactors. Schools are to encourage special visits by industrial and professional personnel to classes and special demonstration activities. School representatives may then request that industries provide instructional expertise as part of the school's regular offerings or enrichment programs.

6. It is advisable to revise the reporting system to parents. During the fifth year, after the personnel growth in school attitude and performance, each school in the district is to reform its student evaluation reports to parents. The current reporting system, which suggests excessive precision for statistical analysis, encourages low-level teaching because papers are easier to grade and high-level critical thinking skills easier to overlook.

7. Of two critical evaluations, the one for the year comes first. The procedures are to be the same as in preceding years.

8. Of importance to the success of the Plan of Five Years, the original questionnaire, which serves as the pretesting and posttesting instrument, is to reappear unchanged. The district office will do the administering and the consultants will provide the analysis and total summative evaluation.

Figure 5 outlines the major thrusts for each of the five years of the staff development plan. While the list of objectives states specific aims of the various groups involved, Figure 5 lists the general content areas which provide focus for each successive year. The figure helps clarify the plan composition as (1) involving five distinct stages and (2) proceeding in a single logical direction toward staff self-direction.

The description of objectives and diagram of major thrusts show progression from a structured to a less structured environment. Program improvement is the key element throughout the entire Five Year Plan, but degrees of freedom for the staff increase from the third year to the fifth year. As stated earlier, long-range planning serves only as a guide for direction, and as new needs arise in a school district, those needs must be addressed. It is to be hoped that the demonstrated improvement in school performance, accompanied by the units with the consultants, will, after a few years, turn around not only the psychological sets of the area, but dramatically improve the mutual respect of the population and employees of the area.

Implementation

In order for the plan to be functional, the administration needed to support staff development with district policy as well

Figure 5

Major Thrusts of Staff Development

Year One

Evaluation
Planning

Year Two

Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP)
1. Recordkeeping
2. Management
3. Teaching Strategies
Positive School Climate
Curricula and Strategies for Advisee-Advisor Period

Year Three

Science and Social Studies
1. Methods
2. Content
Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP)
1. Parent Packets
2. Correlation with Curriculum
Parent Volunteer Program
Information System
Peer Mentor Program
Advisee-Advisor Period

Year Four

New Staff Evaluation Procedures
Personal Growth Plans
Methods for Teaching Critical and Creative Thinking
Excellence in Teaching Procedure

Year Five

School/Community Involvement Program
Methods for Holistic Brain Development
Procedures for Reporting Student Progress

as money. The administration adopted the policy of requiring the staff to stay one afternoon per week to work on curricula, to collaborate with fellow teachers, or to plan for instruction. Prior to the emphasis on school improvement, the staff stayed only once per month for faculty meetings. In addition to the one afternoon per week, the new policy required one afternoon per month for inservice education, a day on which the children were allowed to leave early. Consultants in the three areas: early childhood, middle school, and high school, conducted the inservice education sessions and were available when needed during the afternoon work sessions. As a general rule, faculties met separately in their assigned schools.

The faculty development plan is in the second year of operation. Of the many inservice sessions, two were, in the opinion of the writers, outstanding. These two sessions were a three-day workshop for teachers held prior to school opening on Bernice McCarthy's 4-MAT System (1980) and a leadership training session for principals and central office staff on Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model (1982).

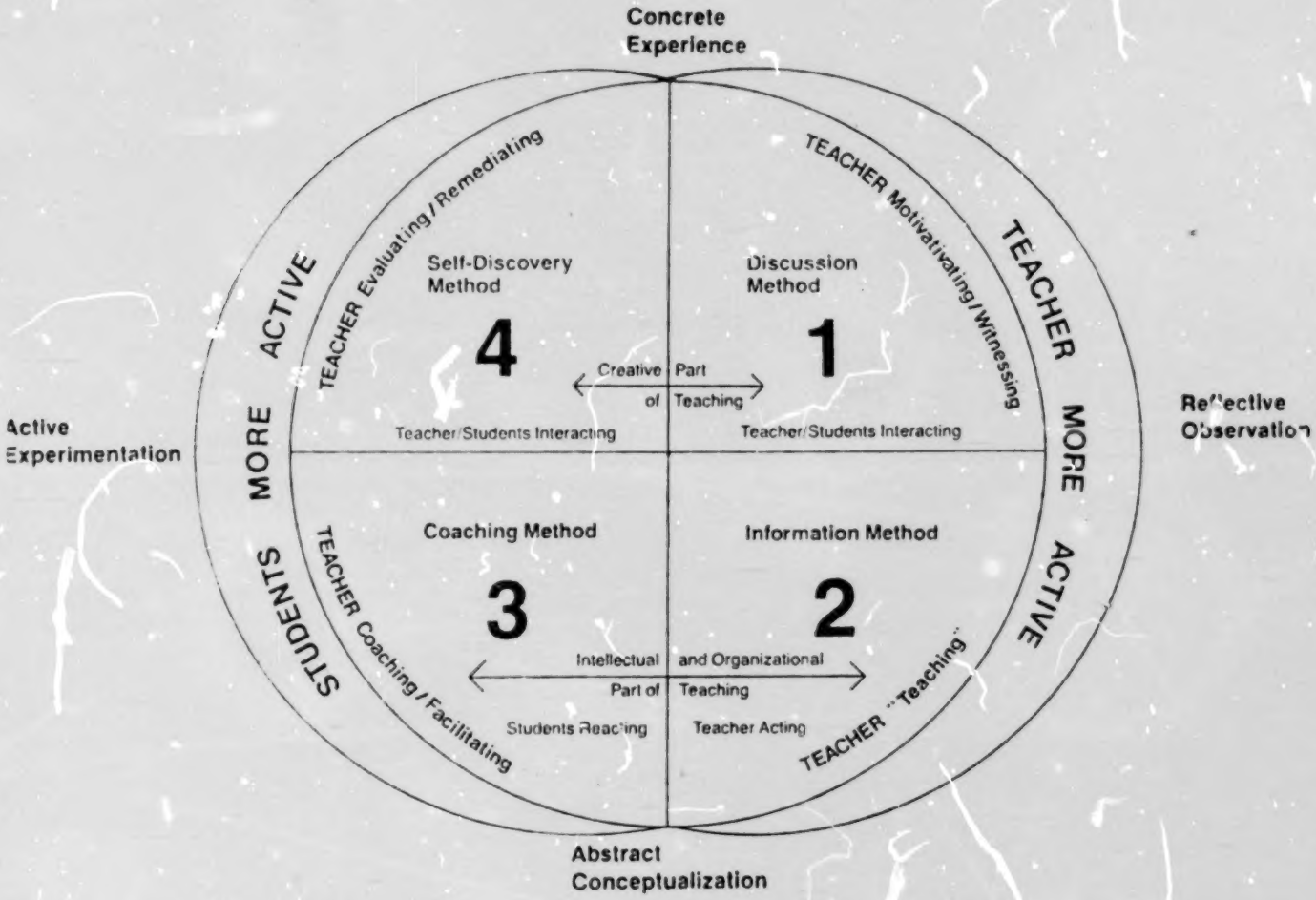
Since one of the major weaknesses of the staff was the lack of variety in teaching styles, the 4-MAT System appeared appropriate. The model which is based on learning style theory trains the teacher to use in the course of a lesson or unit, methods ranging from discussion, lecture, coaching, and on to self-discovery. McCarthy feels that learners can be categorized as one of four basic types: learning from concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, or active experimentation. The model accomodates the preferred learning style of each learner at least one-fourth of the time. On the next page is a diagram of the role of the teacher in instruction. Participants at the workshop internalized the theory and then designed lesson plans in accordance with the model. On the last day of the workshop, participants taught their lessons to small groups of their peers. Periodic monitoring of classrooms throughout the school year showed that teachers are using more experiential types of activities and nondirective teaching than in the previous year.

The inservice for school principals and central office staff was on a day designated for recordkeeping. On the Monday which teachers worked on report cards and permanent records their supervisors examined Situational Leadership Theory.

According to Situational Leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982) there is no one best way to influence people. What leadership style a principal should use with teachers and other professionals depends on the maturity level of the person or group the principal is attempting to influence. Maturity is defined in Situational Leadership as the ability and willingness of persons to take responsibility for directing their own behavior. These variables of maturity should be considered only in relation to a specific task to be performed. This is to say, an individual or a group is not mature or immature in a total

Figure 6

THE TEACHER'S ROLE



McCarthy, B. (1980). The 4MAT System. Oak Brook, IL: EXCEL, Inc. p. 126.

sense. All persons tend to be more or less mature in relation to a specific task to be performed. For instance, teachers may be very responsible in conveying the subject matter but very casual when it comes to evaluating student achievement. As a result of this behavior, it is appropriate for the principal to leave them alone in the area of basic instruction but to supervise closely in terms of evaluation until they can start to do well in that area too. In addition to assessing the level of maturity of individuals within a group, a principal may have to assess the maturity level of a group of teachers, especially if they interact frequently together on given tasks. The reason for this is that there is a relationship between the task-relevant maturity and the appropriate leadership styles to be used as teachers and principals work together for the good of the school. According to the theory, the leadership process is a function of the leader, the follower, and other situational variables. So in order for leadership to be effectively rendered in the school through a mutual partnership of teachers and building administrators, the latter need to be trained to work with professionals at their various maturity levels. By doing this, administrators ease the work load on themselves and the teachers. In turn, the likelihood of achievement and satisfaction is increased.

In addition to thrusts such as improving teaching strategies and management techniques, implementing the Basic Skills Assessment Program, developing and revising curricula, a major thrust was the improvement of school climate. Several activities such as the implementation of a student-of-the-day award and teacher-of-the-week award have improved the learning and working environment. School personnel from the janitor to the principal are trying to remember to use positive, rather than negative, comments.

Although the staff development plan has had some minor problems, the school district feels that the implementation phase is on schedule. Next year and the following year will bring more depth to the program. Emphasis on the personal growth plan is one area that seems to offer particular promise. In the appendix is an example of a personal growth instrument which is helpful in the preparation of growth plans.

Evaluation

The staff development plan includes a three-part evaluation plan. First, formative evaluation is an on-going process throughout the five years and assesses progress toward the goals as well as insuring that the plan is operating smoothly. Secondly, an annual summative evaluation occurs toward the end of each school year to determine whether the goals were met and to make revised recommendations for the following year. Finally, a summative evaluation of the entire five-year project takes place at the end of the last year.

The formative evaluation is steady but informal. It is a process of observing the schools, administration, and teachers to insure that all work in concert toward the common goals. The formative evaluation involves staff conferences, informal observation, inservice schedules, and teacher checklists. Simple observation also yields important information on school activities, appearance, and parent involvement. The staff development team maintains checklists based on the objectives to see that all phases of the project proceed on schedule.

Each year a summative evaluation examines the annual progress toward specific goals. The evaluation includes self evaluation data and staff and consultant attitudinal scales. Also, formal observations take place in the classrooms. Ancillary to the development of the staff should be progress in the achievement of the students. Students take the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) at the beginning of the first grade and the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) tests (grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11) or the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) (grades 1 through 12) at the end of each school year. The school district projected an increase of four percentile points in the national or state norms for each of the five years. Certainly staff development is not the only factor in student achievement, but it is one key factor.

The summative evaluation at the end of the five-year period will compile the data from the annual evaluations and examine the trends against the stated objectives. Also, the parents will complete the school district questionnaire again. The questionnaire indicates how parents feel about the operation of the schools and the education their children receive. The staff development program will be considered successful if parents rate the schools twenty percent better than they did on pretesting.

Since the staff development program is still in progress, the results of the evaluation are preliminary. However, some positive changes occurred in the school district which are noteworthy:

1. Evaluators report a more inviting atmosphere at the schools and growing cooperation from the staff.
2. Attendance at the Parent Teacher Organization meetings at the elementary school increased from 35 at the beginning of the program to 150 most recently.
3. Parents collected donations to purchase a 16 mm projector.
4. The elementary school reports a significant decline in discipline problems.
5. Scores on the CSAB increased by 20%.
6. The scores on the BSAP increased for the first grade students.

The first finding (1) is a direct formative observation which indicates an important step in staff development: the basic willingness and active participation of the staff members. The observations of changes in the parents (2 & 3) are indirect and may stem from other causes but nevertheless indicate a positive change perhaps spurred on by the knowledge that there is an on-

going program for improvement. Finally, the test scores (4 & 5) indicate improvement at least in the first grade. While this is an indirect assessment of staff development, it presages a general feeling of growth. The staff development team hopes student achievement will improve in the other grades as well in the next few years.

Summary

The paper discussed an in-progress staff development program in a small, rural district in South Carolina. Outlined in the discussion is an attempt by the school district to survive through staff development. With limited funds to institute change, the school district utilized consultants from a nearby college and university. The authors share components of the program: the needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. In anticipation of staff growth, the model moves from structured to less structured experiences and focuses on the weaknesses identified by a variety of sources. One of the major strengths of the plan is classroom follow-up.

The purpose of the staff development plan is to make teaching and supervising more rewarding to the staff member while at the same time improving instruction for children in the schools. The school district hopes that the personnel feel they are part of the program, have decision-making power, are valued for their contribution, and can work for personal and school improvement.

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Appendix A

Self-Improvement Plan

SELF-IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Doris B. Matthews
Jim Frank Casteel

The attached Self-Improvement Plan is designed to help you evaluate your present situation and develop a plan to improve your future. Answer honestly and the structure provided will enable you to outline a course of action to attain goals consistent with your abilities. Following are detailed instructions and examples:

1. Ambition. This refers to your general vision of your future. Write the general area you are hoping to improve, such as personal improvement, career advancement, or school improvement.

2. Immediate Goal(s). Determine what you hope to accomplish in the next one or two years. Be sure your goals are consistent with your general ambition.

3. Personal Assessment. Outline only those strengths and weaknesses which are clearly related to obtaining your stated goals. Strengths might include being people-oriented or having good writing skills, while weaknesses might be problems with human relations or Type A behavior.

4. Threats. List as threats those forces outside yourself which might prevent you from reaching your goals. Examples include lack of money or time, children, or an uncooperative spouse.

5. Plan of Action. Include only actions which YOU can take to diminish threats, overcome weaknesses, and attain your goals. Your plan might include taking courses or being more assertive. Discard any actions which are not directly related to achieving the improvements you seek.

6. Timetable. For each action you stated, schedule a date for completion which is within reason.

7. Evidence of Attainment. Determine some physical evidence that will indicate when your goal has been reached. This might be a plaque, a degree, an increase in salary, or a promotion.

8. Benefits or Rewards. Determine what benefit you will derive from achieving your goal. When you reach your goal, will you gain peer recognition, a higher standard of living, self-fulfillment?

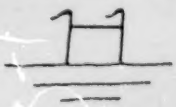
Look over your Self-Improvement Plan. Have you been honest about your weaknesses? Is your plan of action really aimed at your stated goals? Is your timetable reasonable? Are your stated benefits or rewards really what you want? If so, you should have a better understanding of your situation and a rational plan for improvement. Now, DO IT!

SELF-IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Ambition _____

_____

2. Immediate Goal(s) _____



_____

3. Personal Assessment

Strengths

_____

_____

_____

Weaknesses

_____

_____

_____

4. Threats _____

_____

5. Plan of Action _____

_____

6. Timetable _____

_____

7. Evidence of Attainment _____

_____

8. Benefits or Rewards _____

_____

_____ _____

Signature School